

and songs as those of white-eyes *Zosterops* spp., Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*, White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*, Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris*, Black Cuckoo Shrike *Campephaga flava* and others. They were likely breeding.

Somali Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza poliopleura*
We flushed three buntings from along a track in degraded *Acacia gerrardii* woodland at 1830 m on 3 May. One disappeared before we could observe it, but the other two, a male and female of this species, perched alongside our vehicle. We clearly saw the white-patterned wings and patterned greyish streaky back with the grey rump of this bunting. We can only assume that these birds wandered upland to the south and west of their normal, lower, dryer range (Britton 1980 gives 1200 m as the altitudinal maximum). This may be a reflection of generally more arid conditions in the Laikipia region, although the May rains were unusually heavy (only some 255 mm of rain, a 30-year low, fell on the main portion of the ranch in all of 1984).

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DESERT WHEATEAR *OENANTHE DESERTI* IN KENYA

On 17 February 1984 I had to fly to Kiunga (1:45S, 41:29E), north Kenya coast some 10 km SW of the Somali border, in the course of my job. The suddenness of my departure prevented me from taking binoculars. My time on the ground was restricted to the airstrip and adjacent hospital. The habitat was open, as befits an airstrip, with low sparse bush mostly under a metre high. Several Pied and Isabelline Wheatears (*Oenanthe pleschanka* and *O. isabellina*) were present and they, together with the Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* are white-rumped wheatears with which I am very familiar.

I was walking slowly about between the clumps of bush when my attention was drawn by two wheatears chasing one another. As one perched on a twig about a metre from the ground the other flew away from me showing a white rump and a broad black terminal band to the tail (not an inverted T). The other bird remained perched for probably 20 s until I got to within 10 m of it. I was able to see its black throat and sides of head up to the level of the eye, and the black tail; the underparts and mantle were more brown than in *O. isabellina*, wings much darker blackish with light edges to the primary coverts (Isabelline Wheatears seen minutes before and after the Desert Wheatears). It flew away but I could not follow because there was a group of fenced Somali huts in the way.

When the birds were first glimpsed chasing each other, and then when the better observed bird left its perch, they called. I am unable to describe the calls except that they were multi-syllabic and unlike any wheatear I know, that is, nothing like a *chack* sound. The birds were robust, larger than Pied Wheatear and probably about the same size as Isabelline. The observations were made about noon in full sun.

My initial determination of the birds as Desert Wheatears was upheld by the East African Rare Birds Committee. In Somalia the species had not been recorded for the ex-Italian part of the country (all except the northwest) until Ash (1981) obtained several records around Mogadishu between December 1979 and January 1981. His birds were all males and he noted that they extended the range of the species some 1000 km south. Further observations around Kiunga in the Palaearctic winter would be of interest as the area has not been much explored for birds apart from the shore (Fogden 1963). It is interesting that Fogden, who was at Kiunga from 20 July to 19 September and at the Boni Forest some 30 km inland until 6 October, remarked especially that he only saw two species of Palaearctic passerines during his stay (Eurasian Swallow *Hirundo rustica* five on 18 September and Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* one at Boni on 6 October).

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